

16 June 2005

Open Letter to the Leaders of the G-8 Nations

Dear Sirs,

Today, the vast majority of people in developing countries lack adequate access to healthcare infrastructure, essential diagnostics, medicines and vaccines that could save lives and improve economic development. Currently available interventions do not reach all those in need, and many of the necessary preventions and cures for these diseases have yet to be developed. Today, we must fully deploy the available tools to combat diseases in the developing world. At the same time, we must invest in the discovery and development of superior interventions for tomorrow.

At Gleneagles, as the leaders of the G-8 Nations, you can help secure the development and delivery of these essential healthcare products by ensuring sustainability of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) who are at the forefront of the research and development for neglected diseases. Bringing together expertise and resources from multiple stakeholders, these innovative organisations share an ambitious, but achievable goal: to develop and deliver effective and affordable health products to people most in need, but least able to afford them.

In the last decade, science and technology have experienced a quantum leap that has opened up breakthroughs unimaginable a generation ago. However, until a few years ago, these scientific advances were not being translated into products that meet the real and pressing needs of the poorest. There was little research into new diagnostics, drugs, microbicides or vaccines for diseases prevalent in the developing world. From the 1990s, the creation of Public-Private Partnerships dramatically improved the landscape of research and development of these diseases. Naturally, research and development is risky, but the rewards are enormous and long-term. With an array of new and improved interventions, we could mount a more rigorous attack on diseases that trap people and societies in a vicious cycle of ill-health and poverty.

Public-Private Partnerships currently support thousands of scientists from research institutes, academia, and pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. They are working on the most robust product pipeline in history that focuses solely on the health needs of the developing countries. These initiatives have also stimulated and leveraged critical research capacity in countries hardest hit by these diseases. Affected countries are now increasingly able to contribute to solving their own health challenges.

The track record to date shows that this new approach to research and development works: within the PPP pipelines, there are over 8 diagnostics, 45 new drugs, 8 microbicides and 50 vaccines in development addressing HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases, as well as lesser known diseases such as kala-azar and Japanese encephalitis. Combined, they have the potential to impact billions of lives. Sixteen products are already in or entering into late-stage clinical trials. Some of these could be available within the next five years. To ensure that these new technologies rapidly reach those in need, many PPPs are already working on mechanisms for securing predictable, long-term financing and ways to strengthen health systems in resource-poor countries.

Achieving such progress in product development and subsequent delivery requires significant support from and involvement of multiple partners. Philanthropic organizations have played a key role in launching and financing many of these partnerships. The healthcare industry has provided important contributions through its technical and scientific expertise. Many of the projects have received public funding. Nevertheless, we believe governments can and must do more. By championing a balanced set of 'push' mechanisms such as adequate and sustained funding for PPPs with 'pull' mechanisms like the proposed International Finance Facility for immunisation (IFFim), advanced market commitments and other policy changes, you, the G-8 leaders can further increase engagement by the private sector and encourage research and development.

We have begun to demonstrate that we can bring groundbreaking advances in healthcare to the developing world. However, we will not be able to deliver on our goals without your support. On the eve of reviewing the progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals, we call on the G-8 to renew their commitments to innovative technologies that are necessary to achieve and sustain development by supporting the Public-Private Partnerships that are spearheading these exciting research and development efforts.

Signatories:

Product Development Public-Private Partnerships



Healthcare Industry



Global Financing Mechanisms



International Organisations

Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturers Network



Signatories: Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation, Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, Institute for OneWorld Health, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, International Partnership for Microbicides, The PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative, Medicines for Malaria Venture, AstraZeneca, Bayer Healthcare, Becton Dickinson, Eisai Co., GlaxoSmithKline, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations*, National Bioproducts Institute, Novartis*, Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd., sanofi-aventis, Serum Institute of India Ltd., Sigma-Tau, Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturers Network, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Global Forum for Health Research, PATH.